

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 7

February 4, 1998, 12:00 pm
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RONALD REAGAN AIRPORT/Final Passage

SUBJECT: Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Bill . . . S. 1575. Passage.

ACTION: BILL PASSED, 76-22

SYNOPSIS: As passed, S. 1575, the Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport Bill, will amend the Washington National Airport Act to rename the airport the "Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport."

Those favoring passage contended:

We are relieved that we are finally about to vote on passage of this bill to honor President Ronald Reagan. We offered it with the full expectation that it would have unanimous support from Senators. This bill, was, and is, intended as a birthday present from a grateful nation to a truly great American. Unfortunately, some Democrats initially filibustered it last week. Though we do not question their motivations for so doing, we think that their arguments were shabby, and we note that if their filibuster had continued it would have turned what was intended as a gesture of thanks into a slap in the face to a man who is struggling with a debilitating and fatal illness, and who is a personal hero for us and for tens of millions of Americans.

During his 8 years as President, Ronald Reagan served with principle, integrity, and unabashed optimism. He took office at a time of doubt in America. Inflation and unemployment were soaring, United States military forces were weak and demoralized, and American diplomats were held hostage with impunity by third-world despots. The conventional wisdom was that America's best days were behind it. Academics and pundits spoke with authority about the supposed economic superiority of socialism, and Americans were told that they were going to have to give up more of their freedom to government and to expect lower standards of living.

Ronald Reagan had a different vision for America's future, and he had that vision because he had absolute faith in the American

(See other side)

YEAS (76)			NAYS (22)		NOT VOTING (2)	
Republicans (54 or 100%)	Democrats (22 or 50%)		Republicans (0 or 0%)	Democrats (22 or 50%)	Republicans (1)	Democrats (1)
Abraham	Hutchinson	Biden		Akaka	Coats ⁻²	Moynihan ⁻²
Allard	Hutchison	Boxer		Baucus		
Ashcroft	Inhofe	Breaux		Bingaman		
Bennett	Jeffords	Bryan		Bumpers		
Bond	Kempthorne	Byrd		Cleland		
Brownback	Kyl	Dodd		Conrad		
Burns	Lott	Durbin		Daschle		
Campbell	Lugar	Feingold		Dorgan		
Chafee	Mack	Feinstein		Ford		
Cochran	McCain	Graham		Glenn		
Collins	McConnell	Kennedy		Harkin		
Coverdell	Murkowski	Kerrey		Hollings		
Craig	Nickles	Kerry		Inouye		
D'Amato	Roberts	Kohl		Johnson		
DeWine	Roth	Landrieu		Lautenberg		
Domenici	Santorum	Leahy		Levin		
Enzi	Sessions	Lieberman		Moseley-Braun		
Faircloth	Shelby	Mikulski		Reed		
Frist	Smith, Bob	Murray		Robb		
Gorton	Smith, Gordon	Reid		Sarbanes		
Gramm	Snowe	Rockefeller		Torricelli		
Grams	Specter	Wyden		Wellstone		
Grassley	Stevens					
Gregg	Thomas					
Hagel	Thompson					
Hatch	Thurmond					
Helms	Warner					

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

1—Official Business
2—Necessarily Absent
3—Illness
4—Other

SYMBOLS:

AY—Announced Yea
AN—Announced Nay
PY—Paired Yea
PN—Paired Nay

people. He knew that the failures of the Government to solve the country's problems did not prove that they were unsolvable or that even more government was needed; he knew that the answer was to give the American people the freedom to solve the problems themselves. His message was straightforward and unequivocal, shaped by conviction instead of by polling and focus groups--free Americans from oppressive taxation and regulation of their lives, and defend America's principles abroad. He promised he would cut taxes and he promised he would cut regulations. Those promises were not political gimmicks--he meant it and he did it. The result was the largest and longest period of economic growth in America's history. Tax rates were cut, and the economic growth it created resulted in a large net increase in tax collections. If Congress had not insisted on increasing spending even more than the increase in tax collections, the Federal Government would have run surpluses in the 1980s. Under Reagan, average incomes for all Americans rose, and America's optimism soared. Just as importantly, Reagan rebuilt America's defenses and confronted communism and other forms of totalitarianism head-on. He shocked the cynical elite by saying the truth--the Soviet Union was an evil empire that had to be resisted. In the end, the Soviet Union collapsed, and its former military leaders say the major cause was that it destroyed itself by trying to keep up with the Reagan military buildup. In South and Central America, too, Reagan's policies advanced freedom. When he took office, nearly every country in those regions was under authoritarian rule. After the end of his presidency, and the end of the Bush presidency which continued those Reagan policies, only Cuba remained under the control of a dictator.

This Friday will be Reagan's 87th birthday. Sadly, he has Alzheimer's disease, and it is progressing rapidly. As a gesture of thanks to him for all he did for this country, we offered this bill, fully expecting it to be completely non-controversial. Our hope was, and is, to have it enacted before Friday as a birthday present to him. Congress routinely honors Americans who have served their country with distinction by naming buildings and other Federal facilities after them. We did not expect partisanship; we thought that all Democrats would react as Senator Kennedy did. Senator Kennedy spoke in favor of this bill, and recalled fondly how President Reagan, while in office, had joined and even led in efforts to honor his fallen brothers. We were shocked and dismayed, therefore, when some Democrats started a filibuster on this bill last week. We found their stated reasons for doing so to be extremely weak. First, they said that calling it Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport would dishonor President Washington, after whom they claimed it was named. This claim was pulled out of thin air. When this national airport was created, not one single legislative reference was made to the airport being named after President Washington. Instead, the clear understanding then and now was that its name referred to the city, not the President. The second reason they gave was that they thought that it would be too expensive. The total estimated cost, though, is just \$60,000. We could not take this complaint seriously, because the liberal Democrats who made it are the very same Senators who are constantly proposing new ways to increase spending by tens or hundreds of billions of dollars. The third reason they gave, which we found absolutely appalling, was that they did not want to honor the President unless his family asked them to proceed. In our opinion, it is indecent for our colleagues to refuse to support this bill unless Nancy Reagan comes and lobbies them. The fourth weak reason they gave was that he already has a handful of facilities named after him, including the second-largest Federal building (which is still under construction and which we hope someday may be completed). With all due respect, the most fitting memorial to this champion of limited government is not an enormous building that has had inexcusable cost-overruns and delays and which will house legions of bureaucrats. We appreciate the honor, and irony, of naming it after Reagan, but he deserves more. The fifth excuse, which our colleagues made us vote on twice this week, was that they thought local governments should be in charge of deciding the airport's name. However, though local governments have been given some control over the airport, it remains a national airport under Federal control and it operates under very detailed Federal laws that apply solely to it.

We hope that the arguments that were raised against this bill will soon fade. We hope that all that people will remember is the honor that we are bestowing on this great American. We urge our colleagues to join us in voting in favor of passage.

Those opposing passage contended:

President Reagan deserves to be honored, but this bill should be opposed for several reasons. First and foremost, it is not in keeping with his philosophy that the Federal Government should interfere as little as possible in local decisions. Washington National Airport is not run by the Federal Government. It was turned over to local authorities in the 1980s under a long-term lease. Those local governments are opposed to changing the name. Second, renaming the airport will cost \$60,000 and produce no tangible benefit. We do not think that an appropriate way to honor Reagan is to increase Federal spending. Third, President Reagan already has received several honors. His name will be on the second-largest Federal office building once it is completed, and a Nimitz-class aircraft carrier has been named after him. Fourth, we do not know how his family feels about this bill. We think they should have a say on whether or not this bill is appropriate. Fifth, the airport is already named after our first president, George Washington. Tributes should not be shuffled; since its founding it has been Washington National Airport, and that name should never be changed. We find these reasons compelling, so, with no disrespect intended to former President Reagan, we oppose this bill.